

Briefing Statement

Bureau: National Park Service
Issue: “Doing Business in the 21st Century”
Park: Valley Forge National Historical Park
Date: FY 2006

When citizens joined together in the 1870s to protect Valley Forge, their common vision was the preservation of a significant and meaningful place that inspired the Continental Army, and that continued to inspire Americans a century later. Since the founding of the park, citizens have come together a number of times to advocate for it and to protect its important resources from threats. The tradition of citizen stewardship continues today as park volunteers and partners participate in the ongoing work of preservation and interpretation. Each of them shares the vision of the park as a meaningful place of inspiration, refuge, commemoration, release, and pleasure.

The completion of major planning for the park and the launching of new initiatives enables us to re-position the park to make strategic use of the many partnership and cooperative resources available in our community.

Valley Forge NHP wishes to work with volunteers and partners to preserve the park, enhance the experiences of park visitors, and build a community dedicated to conserving the park for the future. Partnerships will be undertaken to support education, sponsor historical and scientific research about park resources, restore native habitats, rehabilitate historic structures, and create exhibits and publications.

The park benefits from the services of a talented and dedicated staff. In the future, the role of park staff and the way we accomplish our objectives will change from current practices. We will move away from the traditional model in which NPS employees themselves implement all objectives, to a model in which NPS employees take on the role of facilitator. In this model, we can more effectively take advantage of abundant outside resources such as volunteers, partners, and grants. Rather than “doing it by ourselves,” each staff member will be enabled to multiply his/her effort through outreach. During the GMP process, we repeatedly heard from partners, volunteers, and the community that they want opportunities to participate more actively in conserving the park. Organizing the staff to enable this will create a cadre of stewards at every level—people and organizations that, through participation, will move from interest to understanding to caring to advocacy. This could be the single most important action in preserving the park for the future.

MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

- In 2004, 848 volunteers contributed 17,912 hours of time, expertise, and energy to realizing the mission of the park. This represents a 54% increase in the number of hours in our program from 2002 to 2004, while at the same time the park decreased our average cost per VIP by 15%, from \$13.95 per VIP in 2002 to \$11.74 per VIP in 2004.
- In FY 2004 the park devoted 94% of its operating costs toward permanent salaries and benefits. By the end of FY 2005 that number will decrease to approximately 90% due to retirements, a phased reorganization of the workforce, as well as enhanced partnerships with groups such as the Student Conservation Association. The park will initiate a Core Operations analysis in 2006 with the goal to reach an 85% level within the next 5 years.

- Continue the effort to increase the span of control within the park by decreasing the number of supervisory positions. The park is currently at a 13% supervisory ratio, which is a decrease from 16% in FY 2003.
- In FY 2005 the park combined the Interpretation and Law Enforcement Divisions, thus eliminating one GS-13 level Division Chief, a move that has saved the park approximately \$100,000 in salary and benefits. Since FY 2002 the park has gone from 6 divisions to 4 divisions.
- Effective October 1, 2005 the park eliminated the 24-hour NPS operated dispatch function within the park. Through an agreement with Montgomery County, Pennsylvania the NPS is now part of a state-of-the-art county emergency dispatching center. This is a vast improvement over an individual and isolated dispatch operation run by NPS staff. This connection to the wider law enforcement and emergency services community is being provided at little cost to the NPS and has dramatically enhanced both visitor and officer safety. The anticipated savings will be reinvested into other law enforcement priorities at the park.

SUSTAINABILITY

- The park utilizes Civic Engagement principles to facilitate interaction with the surrounding communities. To guide the General Management Planning process, the park hosted numerous seminars and presentations to explore the future of the park.
- The park utilizes the Facility Management Software System to guide and measure several areas of its operations. For example the park utilizes FMSS to measure the outcomes of its partnership with the Wayne Pennsylvania Rotary Club and the Penn State University Alumni Association. Both of these groups have donated time, materials, and construction management expertise to the park in order to reduce the maintenance backlog on several of the park's historic buildings and associated features. Specific projects include:

Restoration of Maurice Stephens' Spring House

96 hours and \$11,925.00 value in donated supplies and services
FCI Improved from 0.085 to 0.031

Restoration of Walker Barn (at Stirling's Quarters)

102 hours and \$18,102 value in donated supplies and services
FCI improved from 1.142 to 0.958

Restoration of Knox's Quarters Corn Crib

214 hours and \$16,030.00 value in donated supplies and services
FCI improved and the condition will change from poor to good.

CONSERVATION

- The park is in partnership with the PA Fish and Boat Commission as trustees for a grant program for restoration of the Valley Creek watershed. Funds for grants are provided from the judgments against former polluters of the Valley Creek. The park works with the

Valley Creek Restoration Partnership (municipalities and conservation organizations) to implement restoration projects using this money as seed for outside grants.

- The park received two substantial Save America's Treasures grants over the past five years. The first covers key preservation and stabilization work on five encampment-period structures. Matching funds from state and private sources exceed the grant 2-1. This enabled the park to do critical work in advance of final rehabilitation on two structures and completed critical stabilization work on three others. The second grant covers the conservation assessment and treatment of George Washington's marquee tent. Matching funds were provided by park's legislated partner. Restoration of the tent is completed and it awaits public display.
- The park works with state and local governments as part of a transportation coalition to address severe congestion that affects both the region and the park. The park is party to two agreements governing regional transportation improvements. The first is an MOU among NPS, PennDOT, FHWA and local municipalities through which 18 mutually acceptable options were identified to solve regional transportation congestions while respecting park values. The second is a Programmatic Agreement through which the cooperators are advancing planning for three key transportation improvements. This agreement promotes environmental streamlining as per presidential order.
- To enhance our capacity to address traffic and transportation issues—which cut across all division—the park applied for and received a Transportation Scholar grant from National Park Foundation (NPF). NPF recruited and provides a stipend for an experienced transportation planner to work at the park for a year on our many transportation issues. The planner also will train relevant staff to continue the work on his departure.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

- In 2003, the Schuylkill River rail-trail was completed through the park by Montgomery County. Originating in center city Philadelphia, the trail extends 20 miles to the park, and continues beyond the park. Some 50,000 users a month bike the portion of the trail that is within the park. The county has completed or is implementing a number of trails that connect to the Schuylkill River Trail.
- In Chester County, the Chester Valley Trail (a rail-trail) is under construction just south of the park. The county, Tredyffrin Township and NPS are completing conceptual plans to connect the park to the trail by a trail connection that will enter the park at Wilson Road (a township road that is closed to vehicles). With completion of some missing links within the park, the Chester Valley Trail can connect to the park's existing trail system. The Wilson Road connection also will be part of the county's proposed Patriots' Trail, which will link a number of Revolutionary War sites in Chester County. Additional connections are being jointly planned by both Chester and Delaware counties.
- Upper Merion Township, PennDOT, and NPS are developing plans to connect the township's new trail system to the park's existing system. This link would be constructed as part of the replacement Betzwood Bridge project, funded by the Commonwealth.
- The Commonwealth's greenways and trails plans point to the park as a destination and hub for bicycling.
- The park receives much of its visitation from local residents who enjoy using the 26-mile trail system and other recreational opportunities. Through new interpretive programming aimed specifically at this audience, the park is beginning to foster an understanding and appreciation of the historic and natural resources of the park.

- One of the most interesting and popular recreation trails at the park used to have an ordinary name—the “Multi-Purpose Trail.” This 6.5-mile trail connects all the key historic sites at Valley Forge: the brigade sites where troops were encamped, Washington’s Headquarters, the Washington Memorial Chapel, and many others. This summer the park sponsored a contest for a new, more meaningful name. About 50 entries were received. At National Public Lands Day on September 24, the new name was unveiled: the "Joseph Plumb Martin Trail." The name was selected to honor an ordinary American who made extraordinary contributions to the Revolution. Joseph was a 15-year-old Connecticut boy when he enlisted in 1776. He went on to fight the entire war, not ending his tour of duty until 1783. He was one of the few common soldiers to write about his experiences, leaving behind invaluable—and very colorful—information about life and experiences during the war. Today his memoir is considered to be the best of all surviving first-person accounts of the life and times of a private soldier of the Revolution.

OUTREACH

- Beginning in January 2006, the Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau will sponsor a full-time public affairs/marketing position for the park. This position will be housed at the park and report to the Superintendent. The position will be integral to the park’s marketing, public affairs, and community conservation outreach efforts.
- During the summer of 2005 park staff coordinated *The American Revolution Institute – New Perspectives on an Enduring Legacy*. The Institute offered museum educators, teachers, and NPS staff from across the country an opportunity to experience and construct lessons about the American Revolution. Participants explored ways to enrich their programs by infusing scholarship, applying new methods and strategies, using new technologies, integrating authentic objects and places, and making broad thematic connections.
- The park works with several partners to create a comprehensive distance learning program. During 2006 the park will work with partners to complete a CD-ROM/Internet based comprehensive virtual tour of the park that will allow users to experience this important place and its interpretive themes in an immersive, educational, and enjoyable way. The park has received over \$25,000 in grants to complete the project.

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